



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
BEAUMONT DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

VS.

BRANDY SHANTHA SPRINGER

§  
§  
§  
§  
§  
§

CASE NO. 1:07-CR-198

**FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATION ON GUILTY PLEA**  
**BEFORE THE UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE**

The District Court referred this matter to the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge for administration of a guilty plea and allocution under Rules 11 and 32 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure. Magistrates have the statutory authority to conduct a felony guilty plea proceeding as an “additional duty” pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(3). *United States v. Bolivar-Munoz*, 313 F.3d 253, 255 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2002), *cert. denied*, 123 S. Ct. 1642 (2003).

On April 22, 2008, this cause came before the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge for entry of a guilty plea by the Defendant, Brandy Shantha Springer, on **Count One** of the charging **Indictment** filed in this cause. Count One of the Indictment charges that on or about September 23, 2007, in the Eastern District of Texas, Brandy Shantha Springer, Defendant

herein, did knowingly and intentionally possess with intent to distribute five hundred (500) grams or more but less than five (5) kilograms of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of a Schedule II controlled substance, namely, cocaine HCL, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1).

Defendant, Brandy Shantha Springer, entered a plea of guilty to Count One of the Indictment into the record at the hearing.

After conducting the proceeding in the form and manner prescribed by Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11 the Court finds:

a. That Defendant, after consultation with counsel of record, has knowingly, freely and voluntarily consented to the administration of the guilty plea in this cause by a United States Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Texas subject to a final approval and imposition of sentence by the District Court.

b. That Defendant and the Government have entered into a plea agreement which was disclosed and addressed in open court, entered into the record, and placed under seal.

c. That Defendant is fully competent and capable of entering an informed plea, that Defendant is aware of the nature of the charges and the consequences of the plea, and that the plea of guilty is a knowing, voluntary and freely made plea. Upon addressing the Defendant personally in open court, the Court determines that Defendant's plea is voluntary and did not result from force, threats or promises. *See* FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(b)(2).

d. That Defendant's knowing, voluntary and freely made plea is supported by an independent factual basis establishing each of the essential elements of the offense and

Defendant realizes that her conduct falls within the definition of the crime charged under 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1).

### **STATEMENT OF REASONS**

As factual support for Defendant's guilty plea, the Government presented the following evidence, which was admitted into the record at the plea hearing. *See Factual Basis and Stipulation*. If the case proceeded to trial, the Government and Defendant agreed and stipulated to the information set forth in the factual basis which would be used by the Government in support of the Defendant's plea of guilty. The Government and Defendant agreed that the Government would have proven that Defendant is one and the same with the person charged in the Indictment and that the events described in the Indictment occurred on the dates and in the places alleged in the Eastern District of Texas. The Government and Defendant agreed that the Government would have proven, through the testimony of witnesses and through admissible exhibits, beyond a reasonable doubt, each and every essential element of the offense alleged; specifically, the Government would have proven certain stipulated facts set forth in the *Factual Basis*, on file in the record of this cause. The *Factual Basis* states those facts as follows:

On September 23, 2007, Brandy Shantha Stewart (Defendant) was lawfully stopped for observed traffic violations while traveling east-bound on IH-10 at mile marker 843 in Jefferson County, Texas, in the Eastern District of Texas.

During the course of said lawful traffic stop, Officer Jerry LaChance of the Beaumont Police Department came in contact with the defendant as she sat inside the SUV rental car she had been driving. At that time officer LaChance detected the odor of marihuana emanating from

the interior of said vehicle. Subsequent to detecting this odor, Officer LaChance looked through the windows of the defendant's rental SUV and noticed several brick like objects that appeared to be wrapped in cellophane sitting in plain view in the cargo area of the vehicle. Said "bricks" appeared to be consistent with the typical way that marihuana is wrapped and transported in illicit commerce based upon Officer LaChance's training and experience.

After detecting the smell of marihuana and after observing what appeared to be contraband, officer LaChance asked for and received consent to search the defendant's rental SUV whereupon he discovered 4.94 kilograms of cocaine HCL; 157.43 pounds of marihuana and 49.84 grams of crack cocaine located sitting in plain view in the cargo area of the defendant's rental SUV. The amounts of the drugs were determined by subsequent crime laboratory analysis.

A properly qualified narcotics officer would also testify that 4.94 kilograms of cocaine HCL is an amount of contraband that is consistent with distribution and inconsistent with mere personal use.

Defendant, Brandy Shantha Springer, agreed with the facts set forth by the Government and signed the Factual Basis. Counsel for Defendant and the Government attested to Defendant's competency and capability to enter an informed plea of guilty. The Defendant agreed with the evidence presented by the Government and personally testified that she was entering her guilty plea knowingly, freely and voluntarily.

**RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION**

**IT IS THEREFORE** the recommendation of the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge that the District Court accept the Guilty Plea of Defendant which the undersigned determines to be supported by an independent factual basis establishing each of the essential elements of the offense charged in **Count One** of the charging **Indictment** on file in this criminal proceeding. The Court also recommends that the District Court conditionally accept the plea agreement.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, it is further recommended that, Defendant, Brandy Shantha Springer, be finally adjudged as guilty of the charged offense under Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1).

Defendant is ordered to report to the United States Probation Department for the preparation of a presentence report. At the plea hearing, the Court admonished the Defendant that the District Court may reject her plea and that the District Court can decline to sentence Defendant in accordance with the plea agreement, the federal sentencing guidelines and/or the presentence report because the sentencing guidelines are advisory in nature. The District Court

---

<sup>1</sup>“(3) Judicial Consideration of a Plea Agreement.

(A) To the extent the plea agreement is of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(A) or (C), the court may accept the agreement, reject it, or defer a decision until the court has reviewed the presentence report.

(B) To the extent the plea agreement is of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(B), the court must advise the defendant that the defendant has no right to withdraw the plea if the court does not follow the recommendation or request.

(4) Accepting a Plea Agreement. If the court accepts the plea agreement, it must inform the defendant that to the extent the plea agreement is of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(A) or (C), the agreed disposition will be included in the judgment.

(5) Rejecting a Plea Agreement. If the court rejects a plea agreement containing provisions of the type specified in Rule 11(c)(1)(A) or (C), the court must do the following on the record and in open court (or, for good cause, in camera):

(A) inform the parties that the court rejects the plea agreement;

(B) advise the defendant personally that the court is not required to follow the plea agreement and give the defendant an opportunity to withdraw the plea; and

(C) advise the defendant personally that if the plea is not withdrawn, the court may dispose of the case less favorably toward the defendant than the plea agreement contemplated.” FED. CRIM. P. 11(c)(3)-(5).

may defer its decision to accept or reject the plea agreement until there has been an opportunity to consider the presentence report. *See* FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(c)(3). If the Court rejects the plea agreement, the Court will advise Defendant in open court that it is not bound by the plea agreement and Defendant may have the opportunity to withdraw her guilty plea, dependent upon the type of the plea agreement. *See* FED. R. CRIM. P. 11(c)(3)(B). If the plea agreement is rejected and Defendant still persists in the guilty plea, the disposition of the case may be less favorable to Defendant than that contemplated by the plea agreement. Defendant has the right to allocute before the District Court before imposition of sentence.

### **OBJECTIONS**

Within ten (10) days after receipt of this report, any party may serve and file written objections to the report and recommendation of the Magistrate Judge pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C). Failure to file written objections to the proposed findings of facts, conclusions of law and recommendations contained within this report within ten (10) days after service shall bar an aggrieved party from *de novo* review by the District Judge of the proposed findings, conclusions and recommendations, and from appellate review of factual findings and legal conclusions accepted by the District Court except on grounds of plain error. *Douglass v. United Serv. Auto. Ass'n.*, 79 F.3d 1415 (5th Cir. 1996) (*en banc*); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). The constitutional safeguards afforded by Congress and the courts require that, when a party takes advantage of his right to object to a magistrate's findings or recommendation, a district judge must exercise its nondelegable authority by considering the actual evidence and not merely by reviewing and blindly adopting the magistrate's report and recommendation. *See Hernandez v.*

*Estelle*, 711 F.2d 619, 620 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1983); *United States v. Elsoffer*, 644 F.2d 357, 359 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1981) (per curiam).

**SIGNED this the 23rd day of April, 2008.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
KEITH F. GIBLIN  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE